

# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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General Assembly Shows Determination to Restructure . . . . .	1
Message from Dr. Yamada . . . . .	2
NCCJ Accepts Vietnam Relief Funds . . . . .	2
Gittings Resigns as JCAN Editor . . . . .	2
The More and the Less Youthful Meet at Atami . . . . .	3
Expo '70 . . . . .	4
Yasukuni Shrine Statement . . . . .	4

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHOWS DETERMINATION TO RESTRUCTURE

Strong determination to develop a new NCC structure was evident in the actions of the 21st General Assembly of the National Christian Council of Japan. Approval was also given for cooperation with non-NCCJ groups in Expo '70 and for an international affairs program with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.

The Assembly, which met at Tozanso, Gotemba, March 19-20, is composed of 100 members from NCCJ constituent bodies, including both denominational churches and organizations such as the Japan Bible Society, WCTU, YMCA, YWCA, etc.

The most significant step was the decision to move from study to planning in connection with the reorganization of the NCCJ, the Assembly accepting the report of the Study Committee on Reorganization. The Assembly recommended that concrete plans be drawn up, including proposals for necessary changes in the Council's Constitution, and presented to the 1969 General Assembly.

In the present NCCJ there is no effective over-all framework through which efforts of the various members are coordinated and related. What is sought is some organizational pattern which recognizes that the work of "the church" encompasses the work of Christians through many different organizations and which will serve to relate their various functions more satisfactorily.

The Assembly approved the proposed plans for a united Christian witness at Expo '70 in Osaka to incorporate the efforts of the Japan Catholic Church, the Japan Evangelical Federation, a number of small non-NCCJ denominations, and NCCJ.

On the international scene, the Assembly voted full support for the consultation to be held with the NCCC USA in Japan in September on the theme, "Peace in Asia." Responsibilities for this are delegated to the Committee on International and Social Affairs.

Recording its moral support for a proposal that teams of missionaries from the United States serving in Japan return to their country during the spring and summer to do deputation with special emphasis on the Vietnam issue, the Assembly authorized the International Affairs and Social Committee to help set up training sessions for the team members.

Lively discussion ensued over an anticipated National Diet bill to grant state support to Yasukuni Shrine. The Assembly issued a statement over the name of Assembly Chairman Isamu Omura, opposing the bill as a move to deprive people of the religious freedom which they are guaranteed by the Constitution. (see page 5 for the full text)

Increased efforts to promote the Ecumenical Center of Japan, an inter-church center planned by the NCCJ, were urged.

On March 20, the Assembly accepted the resignation of Dr. Chuzo Yamada, who has served as general secretary of the Council since 1962. Previous to that, he was secretary of General Affairs of the NCCJ for one year. Since no successor was elected at the Assembly, the executive committee was asked to act on this matter.

#### MESSAGE FROM DR. YAMADA

In his letter of March 30 announcing his resignation to friends, Dr. Yamada writes, "I leave the position of General Secretary at a time when there is much hope on the horizon for the strengthening of the ecumenical witness of the Council.... Personally, I have been extremely happy in my role as General Secretary. There have been many personal friendships which I have enjoyed during this period which I hope will continue through the years. I thank each and everyone of you for your many kindnesses and for your cooperation which have helped to make my responsibility a meaningful one." Dr. Yamada's home address is: 12-11-6 chome, Sakura Dai, Nerima Ku, Tokyo.

#### NCCJ ACCEPTS VIETNAM RELIEF FUNDS

A campaign to raise funds for the relief of refugees in both North and South Vietnam, in connection with the WCC campaign for \$500,000, is underway under the sponsorship of the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service.

Special interest has been generated through reports of the work of Rev. Yoshitaka Funato, a member of the EACC-sponsored Asian Christian Service, who is particularly involved with shoe shine boys. His life with them on the streets and in a dormitory in Saigon was featured in an article in the Asahi Newspaper on March 20. A NCCJ representative on the Asian Service team, Mr. Funato is a United Church of Christ pastor.

"Working in the peace movement in Japan is very meaningful," says Mr. Funato, "but I feel that to work for peace I must live and work here to help the people of Vietnam become self-reliant."

Contributions for the campaign for Vietnam relief may be sent to Rev. Kentaro Buma, NCCJ Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service, No. 2, Ginza 4-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo.

#### GITTINGS RESIGNS AS JCAN EDITOR

The National Christian Council expresses its deep appreciation to Mr. Jim Gittings for his services as editor of the Japan Christian Activity News for two years.

Due to the pressures of his work and the need for him to travel throughout Asia and other parts of the world, he has felt it necessary to resign as editor. Although he will continue to write occasional feature articles for the JCAN. The Council accepts his resignation reluctantly. Jim and his family will return to the United States for furlough in June of this year. He will continue to publish An Asia Notebook.

The editing and publishing of JCAN will be carried on by an editorial committee composed of Rev. Stanley Manierre, associate general secretary, NCCJ. Miss Helen Post, publicity, Council of Cooperation, and Miss Akiko Yamaguchi, editor, Japanese NCC News.

#### THE MORE AND THE LESS YOUTHFUL MEET AT ATAMI

Two hundred fifty missionaries related to The United Church of Christ in Japan attended their annual spring conference at the Sagamiya Hotel in Atami, March 23-25. Theme of the assembly, which included many greying and balding heads as well as young faces purposely aged by goatees and beards, was "Youth: Where in Their World Are You?"

The missionaries sought to explore the world of youth through the views of a panel of students, lectures and observations by student workers and church leaders, a showing of a current Haiyuza movie, Wakamonotachi, and discussion in development groups.

Dr. Yoichiro Saeki, pastor, Shinagawa Church, Tokyo, described the conflict arising from the fact that competition, long used as a means of strengthening the Japanese national character, is no longer a motivating force. "Young people today don't really care about competing," he said.

The young workers in Kyoto's old weaving industry are being intellectually "suffocated" by their environment, according to Rev. Robert Fukada, Doshisha School of Theology, who is director of a weaving area labor center. Tragically, they do not have the will to initiate change even though their industry is threatened by modern industrialization, he said.

Four student panelists presented their viewpoints, which ranged from pacifist idealism to classical Marxism. Commenting on the student situation, one student worker pointed out that, "self identify" is established at the exact point at which the individual or group is able to exert a creative effect on the social struggles of the masses.

What proved to be the most revealing insight for many persons present, however, came from an impromptu exchange that erupted between two missionaries.

"Tell me just one thing," said a missionary to the members of the student panel. "Why is it that you students are always against everything?"

A fellow missionary picked up the query and turned it back on the questioner. "What I want to know," he said, "is why we hear these students as 'against everything,' when they have really been talking about the things they are for."

Communion Friday morning was celebrated to the music of "Rejoice," written in contemporary rhythm and folk music harmony. The music was sung by an ensemble and the entire conference, with accompaniment by instrumental group which included drums, recorders, string bass, French horn, trumpet, and guitars. An offering of \$108,000 (\$300) will be sent through the Japan National Christian Council for Vietnam relief.

One hundred sixty out of 240 missionaries attending the conference signed a letter to United States President Lyndon B. Johnson denouncing escalation of the Vietnam War. The letter, dated March 27 and carrying the dateline of Atame, indicates the signees' support for the position set forth in a letter to the New York Times from a group of five Harvard University professors, including former Ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer. The missionaries pledged themselves to work for a policy based upon negotiation, reconciliation and reconstruction. Copies of the letter were sent to other government officials and candidates for the nomination for president.

A number of Japanese church leaders, guests from Okinawa, Korea, and the United States, and missionaries serving with other churches in Japan also attended the conference.

#### EXPO '70

As the vast Senri hills become criss-crossed by tractors and trucks preparing the way for Expo '70, the International Exhibition to be held in Senri, Osaka, in 1970, Christian groups are moving ahead in their plans for a cooperative exhibit hall.

Bishop Hinsuke Yashiro of the Japan Episcopal Church was elected president of the newly formed National Committee for the Christian pavilion. Vice presidents are Bishop Yoshigoro Taguchi, Osaka Diocese of the Japan Catholic Church; Dr. Isamu Omura, chairman, National Christian Council; Rev. Inojiro Ishida, Osaka district moderator of the UCCJ, and Rev. Takesaburo Usaki, chairman, The Japan Evangelical Federation. Named chief administrator of the project is Mr. Jiro Nishimura, an Osaka layman in the UCCJ.

A goal of 100 million yen (\$270,000) was suggested and the national committee and a committee of Osaka business men is beginning to make plans for the fund-raising campaign.

#### YASUKUNI SHRINE STATEMENT

The 21st General Assembly of the National Christian Council of Japan issued the following statement concerning the anticipated Diet bill to give state support for the maintenance of Yasukuni Shrine, a memorial to the war dead of Japan, located in Tokyo. The statement, which will be delivered to Prime Minister Sato, reads as follows:

The National Christian Council opposes the Yasukuni Shrine Bill. Yasukuni Shrine is one of Japan's religions; it is not right, nor is it possible, through political maneuverings, to make this a non-religious body. It is clear that the chief purpose of this bill is to deprive people of the religious freedom which the Constitution guarantees.

We Christians, as citizens of Japan, desire that proper respect and gratitude be paid to those who have died in battle as a result of their loyalty to their country. But we cannot help but be opposed to doing this in a way that violates our Constitution.

Signed, Isamu Omura, Chairman  
21st General Assembly  
National Christian Council  
Tokyo, Japan  
March 20, 1968